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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 004194

SIPDIS

PLS BRING TO ATTENTION OF S, PA AND NEA AT OOB

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SUBJECT: GOI OFFICIAL REAFFIRMS POLICY ON GAZA HOUSES,
DENIES NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE

Classified By: Ambassador Daniel C. Kurtzer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Shalom Turgeman, Prime Minister Sharon's foreign policy advisor, told the Ambassador early July 6 that the GOI's policy with respect to Gaza houses remains as conveyed to the Secretary, namely, the GOI will destroy the Gaza houses during the evacuation of the settlements, the Palestinians will remove the rubble, and the Palestinians will not be responsible for paying for the operation. Turgeman said Sharon had made this policy clear during his July 5 appearance before the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. Turgeman specifically denied the New York Times article which quoted an unnamed Israeli official as saying no such deal has been finalized and that the Secretary had been misinformed of Israel's position. Turgeman's assertion was seconded by Sharon's senior advisor Dov Weissglas in a July 4 conversation with the Ambassador, in which Weissglas said the arrangement stands and that Israel knows it is responsible for arranging to pay for the removal of the rubble.

2. (C) Turgeman said it is clear that the source of the New York Times article is Vice Premier Shimon Peres, who has been waging a rear guard action against the government's decision on Gaza housing. Turgeman said Sharon does not feel the need to say anything more publicly on the matter, having made his statement yesterday in the Knesset committee.

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KURTZER